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GERMAN MILITARY GOVERNMENT OVER EUROPE:

THE SS AND POLICE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

Description

The report analyzes the role of the SS and Police in securing control of occupied Europe by the Nazis and describes the use of German and native police and related personnel; the differing problems presented in each of the occupied areas are separately analyzed.

1 January 1945

This study is Part Two, II, of the series

GERMAN MILITARY GOVERNMENT OVER EUROPE

the outline of which is as follows:

Part One. Principles and Methods of German Military Government over Europe

Part Two. German Controls in Occupied Europe

I. The German Army in Occupied Europe
*II. The SS and Police in Occupied Europe
III. Military and Police Tribunals in Occupied Europe
IV. The Nazi Party in Occupied Europe
V. Technical and Economic Troops in Occupied Europe
VI. Economic and Financial Controls in Occupied Europe
VII. Labor Controls in Occupied Europe
VIII. Propaganda in Occupied Europe

Part Three. The German Occupation of Individual Regions

Section One. Areas of Military Administration

I. Belgium
II. France
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Section Two. Areas of Civil Administration

I. The Netherlands
II. Norway
III. Ostland and the Ukraine

Section Three. Appended Territories (Nebenländer)

I. The Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia
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THE SS AND POLICE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

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II. THE SS AND POLICE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

A. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate guarantors of Nazi domination of occupied countries were the Army, the police, and the SS (Schutz-staffeln). Although the role of the police and the SS varied from country to country, their basic problem everywhere remained the same: the subjugation of foreign populations without undue waste of German manpower. This was not easy. The continuance of the war and the threat of German defeat resulted in three factors disturbing to Germany's purpose: (1) increasing hostility to the invaders; (2) an economic situation which called for tighter controls and more complete supervision; (3) confusion and disorganization in consequence of Allied bombing raids.

The police and the SS followed two general lines of action in meeting this problem. First, they supplemented, reinforced, dominated, and, in some instances, reorganized existing police forces. Second, they sought to cultivate and train pro-German elements to be used as regular police, police auxiliaries, para-military forces, guards, and SS men. In this work the two branches cooperated closely. Generally, however, it may be said that the police were responsible for the more technical aspects of establishing civilian controls, while the SS concentrated upon the cultivation of reliable pro-German groups.

The elite, para-military SS was the most fanatical of all Party organizations. As such, its position in the scheme of Nazi domination was clearly defined. It operated abroad through the Waffen-SS and the native units of the General (Allgemeine) SS which were established in some countries. The Security Service of the Reich Leader SS was administratively coordinated with the Secret State

Police (Gestapo).

The police were traditional agents of the German state. The extent to which they came under Party control must be examined at the outset in order to realize their position more clearly. Furthermore, since the police are a specialized group, every branch of which was employed in occupied Europe, it is desirable to engage also in a somewhat detailed review of their organization and functioning.

B. THE CIVILIAN POLICE AND THE SECURITY SERVICE OF THE REICH LEADER SS

1. Basic Reforms

The German police were placed under the command of the Reich Leader SS, Heinrich Himmler, on 17 June 1936.1/ Although the sovereign right to exercise police power had previously been transferred from the German states to the Reich,2/ the appointment of Himmler as Chief of Police of the entire country was the first practical step leading toward a unified system. The reforms which he instituted shortly after his appointment placed the police in a strong position to undertake their wartime assignments.

These reforms provided, among other things, for the personal and ideological domination of the police by the SS, increased militarization, and uniformity in training and procedures.

The domination of the police by the SS may be said to have been almost completed at the outbreak of the war. Shortly after Hitler came to power, all political suspects were purged from the ranks.3/ In 1935, when universal military service was instituted, the transfer of police officers and enlisted men to the armed forces was undertaken. By 1942 56,000 (54 percent of the total number of police) had gone into military service.4/ They were replaced by men drawn from Party organizations, and in this process special

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1/ Reichsgesetzblatt, I, 487. (Cited hereafter as RGBl.)
2/ Law on the Reorganization of the Reich, 30 January 1934; RGBl., I, 75.
3/ Reich Law to Restore the Civil Service, 7 April 1933; RGBl., I, 175.
4/ Deutsche Verwaltung, 10 December 1942, p. 465.

attention was given to the prior right of the SS to fill vacancies.1/ The practice of selecting officers from the graduates of the SS Junker Schools was soon established. Changes in the organization of the police made it possible to place every level of operations under the supervision of SS Leaders.

The militarization of the police was accomplished in the following way: first, by placing all members of the uniformed service in a definite command relationship; second, by requiring all recruits to serve in "barracked" (kasernierte) formations for a period of time; third, by making field exercises, drill, and technical military training mandatory in all uniformed commands. Furthermore, plans for the mobilization of the police were worked out in detail. Matters pertaining to pay, supply, ordnance, and administration of a police regiment, battalion, or company when it moved into the field were set forth in the Polizeidienstvorschrift Nr. 33 über den Wirtschaftsverwaltungsdienst bei Verwendung der Polizei ausserhalb des Standortes.2/ This document has formed the basis for the administration of units in the field since the invasion of Austria.

Uniformity of training and procedures, insofar as it was achieved, was based upon a series of directives issued by the Reich Minister of the Interior. In these directives the police of the states and the independent municipalities were required to conform to the practices established in Prussia or introduced by the Nazis. Police schools and journals aided in the explanation of new material, and the inspectors operating in each corps area maintained a constant check on changes made in lower administrative headquarters.

1/ This right was recognized in law on 26 July 1937.
2/ Deutsche Verwaltung, 10 December 1942, p. 465.

The reforms outlined above made it possible for the Nazis to transfer the police to service in occupied countries without going through a last-minute reorganization. Under the control of the SS they were ready to undertake the most extreme measures to assure German control abroad. They were in a position to establish headquarters in foreign cities with a minimum of confusion, because the command relationship developed by the Nazis took the place of the German civil administration once the police had been moved into the field. Finally, because the police were trained in uniform procedures, it was possible to shift personnel from one command to another, or to form groups drawn from all parts of the Reich, without impairing efficiency.

2. Police Organization

a. The Order Police, the Security Police, and the Security Service of the Reich Leader SS

The two main branches of the police were the Order Police (Ordnungspolizei) and the Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei). The Order Police include the following:

(1) the Protective Police (Schutzpolizei)

(2) the Rural Police (Gendarmerie)

(3) the Administrative Police (Verwaltungspolizei)

(4) the Fire Protection Police (Feuerschutzpolizei)

(5) the Harbor and River Protection Police (Wasserschutzpolizei)

The Security Police include:

(1) the Criminal Police (Kriminalpolizei)

(2) the Secret State Police (Geheime Staats-Polizei)

The Security Service of the Reich Leader SS (Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS -- SD), although a Party organization, had been placed under the Commander of the Security Police, who reportedly was also put in charge of various sections of the military intelligence organization (Abwehr) in 1944.

Each of the main branches of the police was under a separate command and each had a main office in Berlin.1/

b. The Higher SS and Police Leaders (Höhere SS und Polizeiführer)

In each Corps Area (Wehrkreis) the operations of both branches of the police were coordinated with those of the SS by a Higher SS and Police Leader. In police matters this official was assisted by an Inspector of Order Police (Inspekteur der Ordnungspolizei) and an Inspector of Security Police and the Security Service (Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD). The Higher SS and Police Leader stood at the apex of the police and SS "military" hierarchy of the Corps Area. The inspectors were responsible for military training, technical efficiency, and equipment of the respective branches under their control.

3. The Order Police (Ordnungspolizei)

a. The Protective Police (Schutzpolizei)

The police who patrol the streets and direct traffic in German towns and cities were called the Protective Police. They were recruited from the Waffen-SS and the Army where, during their period of service, they had to achieve the rank of sergeant. Before being accepted into the police they were given an aptitude test and carefully checked as to political reliability. During their first years of service they were required to live in police barracks in one of the larger cities of the Reich. There they were trained in quasi-military operations, such as riot control, street fighting, and operations employing mechanized equipment and heavy weapons. For specialized training they were sent to

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1/ Acting commander of the Order Police was SS Obergruppenführer, General of Police and Waffen-SS Alfred Wünnenberg. Its main office was the Hauptamt Ordnungspolizei. The Security Police was under the command of SS Obergruppenführer, General of Police Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner. Its main office was the Reichssicherheitshauptamt.

one of the police schools.1/ This branch of the police was staffed with officers who, during later years, were drawn almost exclusively from the Waffen-SS.

b. The Rural Police (Gendarmerie)

The Rural Police were simply the Protective Police for rural areas. They were, however, an older and more responsible group. Eight to ten years' service in the Protection Police were required before appointment to this branch. Those chosen were outdoor men who were prepared to ride their posts in all kinds of weather and to face single-handedly any emergency which might develop. Officers in this service were trained to handle a command which might stretch over many miles of territory. Motorized squads of the Rural Police patrolled the highways.

c. The Administrative Police (Verwaltungspolizei)

Members of the Administrative Police took care of all matters pertaining to internal administration: supply, pay, personnel records, building maintenance, operation of jails, materiél, etc. They also executed administrative measures and enforced laws which required the coercive intervention of a public agency in civilian affairs and which pertained to matters other than the maintenance of order and the prevention and detection of crime -- such as price control, factory laws, the issuance of identification cards, the registration of personnel, and the enforcement of health regulations. There were no officers in the Administrative Police. Instead of a hierarchy of ranks and grades, there were four categories: the lower, medium,

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1/ Motor transportation, traffic, sports, riding, skiing, and technical schools are mentioned in Werner Best, Die deutsche Polizei (Darmstadt, 1940), p. 58.

elevated, and superior services.1/ Members of the lower service included janitors and messengers. The medium category included clerks, and the elevated group embraced clerical and administrative workers in more responsible positions. The superior service was made up of academically trained specialists and policy-making officials.

d. The Fire Protection Police (Feuerschutzpolizei)

All paid members of the Municipal Fire Fighting Service in Germany were taken over into the police. In line with the general mobilization of the German people for war, this branch was highly militarized and was trained to counteract the effects of air raids. Because of their technical competence in demolition and in dealing with accidents they were sometimes referred to as the "Engineer Corps" of the police.

e. The Harbor and River Protection Police (Wasserschutzpolizei)

Wherever inland, coastal, or harbor traffic was sufficiently heavy, patrol boats of the Harbor and River Protection Police were on hand to exercise control. This service, like the other uniformed branches, was thoroughly militarized and trained to employ light weapons.

4. The Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei)

a. The Criminal Police (Kriminalpolizei)

This branch included all criminal investigators and specialists in the Reich. The Directorates (Kriminalpolizeileitstellen) and Offices (Kriminalpolizeistellen) of the Criminal Police were central collecting points for fingerprints, aliases, photographs, etc. The activities of

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1/ They were referred to as Beamten des einfachen (lower), mittleren (medium), gehobenen (elevated), and höheren (superior) Polizeiverwaltungsdienstes.

the investigators were controlled from these points. Employment of scientific methods and emphasis upon methodical paper work were the distinctive features of this branch.

b. The Secret State Police (Geheime Staatspolizei)

Within Germany the Secret State Police (Gestapo) were primarily concerned with the eradication of all political opposition to the Reich. They depended upon the Security Service of the Reich Leader SS and the Order Police for reports on minor offenses and simple investigations. Their own agents covered trouble spots and made special investigations. Like the Criminal Police, they had central directorates and offices which compiled and processed the mass of data collected in the field. The Frontier Police (Grenzpolizei) were controlled by the Gestapo.

c. The Security Service of the Reich Leader SS (Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS)

The SD, as this service was commonly referred to, was functionally the intelligence service of the National Socialist Party. Organizationally it was a branch of the SS. It was built around a cadre of full-time, paid staffs assisted by honorary collaborators (ehrenamtliche Mitarbeiter) of the General SS. This service reported on individuals and was also trained to record changes in the attitude of the public.

C. THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE POLICE AND SECURITY SERVICE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

1. General

Various degrees of police control were exercised in areas outside Germany proper. These controls ranged from employing German advisors to the local police, as in Rumania, to complete incorporation of native police forces into the German police system, as in Luxemburg.1/ Until 1944 the Nazi-occupied areas of Europe could be roughly divided into two groups: first, those countries where, outwardly at least, police and SD played a minor role; second, those countries in which the police assumed a dominant position in the institutional structure. But before Germany lost some of these territories, the differentiating features had become less apparent.

The first group included Belgium, France, and Greece. These countries were originally under military government. In the course of 1944 the occupation authority in Belgium and Northern France was transferred to a civilian Nazi administration. Later, the SS and Gestapo chiefs became the most influential authorities in Denmark, Belgium, and to some extent in France.

The second group was made up of Norway, the Netherlands, the General Government, the Protectorate, Serbia, the Ostland, and the Ukraine. This group is less susceptible to characterization. Serbia was under some type of military government. Norway, the Netherlands, the Ostland, and the Ukraine were ruled by German Reich Commissioners. The General Government and the Protectorate represented two stages

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1/ In police affairs, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, Bialystok, Upper Styria, and Carinthia were treated as parts of the Reich.

of incorporation of foreign territory into the Reich. Their populations, however, with the exception of Racial Germans were treated as subject peoples. For this reason they will be considered here as occupied territories.

It must be emphasized that there was no essential difference between the various areas under German control in the matter of the relationship between the officer or official responsible for police affairs and the headquarters of the German police in Berlin. In each area the powers of the supreme military commander or civilian administrator were limited in police affairs by virtue of the fact that Heinrich Himmler, the Chief of Police, was authorized to issue binding directives to the officer or official responsible for police affairs.1/ These directives normally pertained to matters involving the security of German interests, the administration of the political police (Gestapo and Security Service), and the internal administration of the police (training, pay, promotion, etc.). In the coordination of the police with other branches of the administration and the issuance of directives pertaining to local affairs, the area commander or administrator was the responsible official.

2. Occupied Countries with Limited German Police Control

a. The Employment of the German Police and Security Service

The German police and Security Service were employed in some countries to supplement the work of native police or that of the native police in cooperation with the German Army and military police. The branches employed in greatest numbers were: the Secret State Police, the Security Service,

1/ Neue Ordnung, 29 August and 5 September 1943.

the Coast Guard Service, and the Organization Todt Police.1/

(1) The Secret State Police (Gestapo) and the Security Service (SD)

Agents of the Gestapo and the SD were to be found in every part of occupied Europe. They wore either plain clothes or the SS uniform, the Security Service adding an armband with the initials "SD." In isolated instances, agents have been reported wearing army uniforms with distinguishing insignia. The SD paid special attention to resistance movements.

Working with and virtually controlling the national secret police, the Gestapo and SD watched over subversive and patriotic movements, protected the security of German civil authorities, and cooperated with the Abwehr organization (the German Military Intelligence). Those citizens of an occupied country whom they suspected of anti-German activity or ideas were subject to the same summary arrest and imprisonment as German citizens at home.

The administration of the Gestapo and the SD was subordinated to the Chief of the Security Police in Berlin. Their activities in Denmark were directed by a Commander of Security Police and Security Service whose SS rank (Obergruppenführer, equivalent to German full general) was equal to that of the German Plenipotentiary. In France the Higher SS and Police Leader outranked the German Ambassador as SS officer. In Belgium an SS general, originally with the title "Deputy of the Reich Leader SS and Chief of the German Police," ultimately headed army, police, and SS in this area.

1/ For a description of the Organization Todt see "Technical and Economic Troops in Occupied Europe," Part Two, V, of this series.

(2) The Frontier Police

In addition to the Grenzpolizei (frontier police) working under Gestapo auspices, there was a verstärkter Grenz-Aufsichtsdienst (Reinforced Frontier Control Service) that controlled the traffic of persons, merchandise, and foreign currency in restricted areas. This service was subordinated to the territorial military commander. It could use military guard units (described below) for assistance.

(3) The Coast Guard Service (Marine Küstenpolizei)

The Marine Küstenpolizei were independent of the interior police administration. The Coast Guard Service was recruited, in part, from the River and Harbor Protection Police (Wasserschutzpolizei). It operated along the entire coast of occupied Europe; it performed normal harbor police duties, supervised the fishing industry, and cooperated with the Security Police in border control.

(4) The Organization Todt (OT) Police

The OT Police, composed of Germans, Frenchmen, Dutch, Belgian, and Flemish personnel, were semi-militarized guards who assisted in the control of the OT working personnel and guarded installations under construction. The Police Regiment Todt fought at Dieppe.

b. The Reorganization of the Native Police

In the occupied countries unreliable elements were purged from the police, and collaborationist units were organized under the supervision of the SS, the German Army, and the native governing groups.

The native police of Belgium was to some extent reorganized along lines which approximated the German model. German police experts were employed in the development of police schools, the Food Police, Rural Guard, Citizens' Guard,

Political Police, and in the reorganization of the Garde Nationale. The native Gendarmerie continued to exist but it was virtually disarmed by the Nazis. The Rexist Party maintained a Gestapo-like network. One unit cooperated with the Nazi Feldgendarmerie in tracking down clandestine organizations, black markets, etc.; another specialized in anti-sabotage and bodyguard duties.

In France the existence of a highly centralized police and the vigorous collaborationist policy of Vichy made the reorganization of the police system along German lines unnecessary. According to the terms of the armistice the French police, even in the occupied territory, remained under French control. The French security police expanded their activities -- once mostly investigative and informative in nature -- to include maintenance of order and to implement the anti-Jewish and anti-Communist policies of the Vichy government. In a special effort to combat sabotage ordinary citizens were drafted as railroad and harvest guards. In the final stage of the occupation police controls were concentrated in the hands of the commander of the fascist militia, an anti-guerrilla, terroristic organization.

3. Occupied Countries with Full German Police Control

a. The Higher SS and Police Leaders

Although native police and, to a certain extent, German military police also, operated extensively in Norway, the Netherlands, the General Government, the Protectorate, Serbia, the Ostland, and the Ukraine, it was characteristic of these areas that the German police exercised control over all police activities. Each area was patterned in police matters after the German Corps Area (Wehrkreis). A Higher SS and Police Leader stood at the apex. Under him, in the

place of the Inspectors of the Order Police and the Security Police, were commanders of these branches. The several subdivisions of the two branches served directly under their respective commanders (Kommandeure).

The Higher SS and Police Leaders in occupied areas were given much greater responsibilities than those in Germany proper. Their command over the police covered administrative matters in addition to training, inspection, and coordination.1/ In the Protectorate, General Government, and Holland they occupied posts of ministerial rank. Although they served under the supreme authorities of occupation, they continued in some respects to be the representatives of Himmler. Similarly, the commanders of the Order and Security Police were to some extent responsible to the commanders of their respective branches in Berlin.

b. The Lower Echelons

In the General Government, the Ostland, and the Ukraine, Police and SS Leaders were in charge of the police in the major administrative subdivisions. They were assisted by commanders of the Order Police and the Security Police. In the Ostland and the Ukraine combined command was carried one step further: an SS and police garrison commander (Standortführer) was on the staff of all District Commissariats (Gebietskommissariate).

It will be observed that the more backward or "foreign" the area, the more elaborate was the German police administrative structure. In Norway, Holland, and the Protectorate, native police to a considerable extent assumed the burden of local control. In Serbia the German police, army, and native police shared the task of maintaining order. In the

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1/ In Germany the police were administered by the mayors, county councillors, district presidents, and similar officials.

General Government, Ostland, and the Ukraine, the Germans were required to supply responsible leadership for all levels of command.

c. Personnel, Pay, and Supply

German uniformed police units in occupied areas were made up of regular German police reinforced by police reservists.1/ The regular police received pay based upon the schedule prevailing in Germany. Reservists were given, in addition to their maintenance, a small allowance for personal expenses. If they were married, a family allowance was paid under the provisions of the Emergency Service Ordinance (Notdienstverordnung). Food, quarters, pay, equipment, and materiél were supplied by Administrative Police officials attached to every unit.

The Native Guard units (Schutzmannschaften) in the Ostland and the Ukraine were also paid and supplied by the Administrative Police. Although evidence is incomplete, it is assumed that other native personnel, who were absorbed into German police organizations or organized as auxiliaries under direct German supervision, were treated in the same way. The majority of native policemen, however, were attached to forces maintained by native governments and paid and supplied by them.

d. The Order Police

(1) The Protective Police and the Rural Police

Over fifty battalions of Protective Police (500 to 550 officers and men each) were reported in Norway, Holland, Poland, the Ostland, and the Ukraine. Each battalion was divided into four companies and a headquarters detachment. They wore the usual soldier's uniform with special insignia and were equipped with infantry weapons. In Holland and

1/ Deutsche Verwaltung, 10 December 1942, p. 466.

Norway they formed a mobile reserve employed in case of riots or anti-German actions. The vast majority of such police troops were employed in Poland, the Ostland, and the Ukraine. Operating as complete battalions, they were also used at the front or in heavy actions against partisans. Artillery support was available to them where this was required. Broken down into small groups, they searched for concealed weapons, controlled refugees, and protected road and rail supply lines against sabotage. One battalion, it is claimed, was assigned to guard a 1,400-km. stretch of railroad track.1/ Under such conditions the individual policeman had to be both resourceful and highly dependable.

German Protective and Rural Police were used as cadres for native guard units and, in some instances, were entrusted with the administration of police affairs in relatively large areas. One report describes a rural policeman who controlled the destinies of 35,000 persons.

(2) The Administrative Police

In addition to taking care of all matters pertaining to the internal administration of the police (pay, supply, quarters, equipment, etc.), the Administrative Police were used in establishing and operating certain civilian controls. Identification cards for the general public, passports, and weapon permits were issued by them in areas where the native police were not considered sufficiently reliable to be entrusted with this work. They were also responsible for price regulations and, to a limited extent, for factory laws in occupied areas. The highest Administrative Police agency in each of the occupied areas was the Office of Administration and Law (Verwaltung und Recht), which was attached to the headquarters of the Commander of the Order Police.

1/ Deutsche Verwaltung, 10 December 1942, p. 466.

During the first stage of occupation high-ranking Administrative Police experts were engaged in the reorganization of native police systems. Traffic specialists, it is stated, were used in the drive to make German traffic law standard for the whole of occupied and satellite Europe.1/

(3) The Fire Protection Police

Two mobile regiments of German Fire Protection Police were at one time assigned to occupied areas; one to Holland and the other to the Protectorate. 2/ It is altogether possible that they were recalled later because of the increased threat to Germany proper and because police experts of this branch assisted in the establishment of thoroughly modern fire departments in most of the cities of occupied Europe.

(4) Other Order Police Units

The Coast Guard Service and the Organization Todt Police operated in the areas under consideration in much the same manner as was described above.

e. The Security Police

(1) The Criminal Police

In the areas under consideration, German nationals ordinarily could not be searched, investigated, or arrested by native police officials. For this reason the German Criminal Police operated abroad with respect to their own countrymen in a manner similar to that which they followed in the Reich. In addition, they completely dominated the native police. In the Protectorate they operated directorates and offices exactly as in Germany. Each of these agencies

1/ Deutsche Verwaltung, 10 December 1942, p. 466.
2/ Ibid.

maintained files of fingerprints, aliases, and crime reports for a given district. Although there is no evidence of the existence of similar offices elsewhere, it is assumed that the German Criminal Police established their own control files wherever it was possible to do so.

(2) The Gestapo and the SD

The German secret police services had one of the most important functions allotted to any agency operating in occupied territory. Their investigations prior to occupation were amazingly thorough. Within a few hours after the Army had taken a given area, suspects had been ferreted out and imprisoned. Special teams of Gestapo and SD agents would accompany the advance troops into an area, proceed to the headquarters of political party, labor, and business organizations, seize the files and begin an immediate round-up of political opponents, engineers, technicians, and other key persons.1/ In this way sabotage was largely prevented and the restoration of production facilitated.

Once established in an area, the Gestapo and SD created a network of informers, set up and operated files similar to those of the Criminal Police, took control of native secret police organizations, and, to the extent that was necessary, created auxiliary police organizations. The control of identification cards and passes was one of their most important functions.2/ For this purpose order patrols and local police were placed under their supervision. In the occupied East the Germans introduced a very rigid system of population stabilization. In some areas the permission of a German security agent was necessary before

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1/ Die deutsche Polizei, 15 May 1942.
2/ Ibid., 15 February 1943.

persons could move from one place to another. This system, which appears both extreme and cumbersome, developed in response to the threat of guerrilla activity. Other duties included reporting on available labor, providing for the movement of Racial Germans back to the Reich, and supervising the work of native constables.

The Gestapo, extended as it was, depended on whatever reliable German or collaborationist personnel was available in a given area to make arrests and carry out its orders. Clear evidence regarding the number of such persons in the service of the Gestapo cannot be obtained, since German secret agents wore either the uniform of the SS or that of the Waffen-SS, or went about in plain clothes. There is some evidence to the effect that the SD had been granted executive police powers in the occupied East and Serbia. In the Netherlands the SD reportedly was in charge of curbing the black market.

f. The Reorganization of Native Police and the Establishment of German Control

In Norway, Holland, the Protectorate, parts of the Ostland (the Baltic states), and Serbia, the native police organizations, although radically reorganized, were retained on a nation-wide basis. In Norway and Holland the native local police forces were formerly administered by the separate communities (much as is the case in the United States). After the Nazis came in, a hierarchical system modeled after that existing in Germany was introduced, and, to a certain extent, branches of police resembling those in Germany were organized. Control over the police was assured by placing the head of native police under a German Higher SS and Police Leader and by infiltrating German police officials into strategic positions throughout the system.

In the Protectorate the Secret State Police and such parts of the Criminal Police as were needed for the prosecution of crimes punishable under German criminal law were in German hands, while the Czech counterparts of the Order Police and some Criminal Police were also placed under German command.

In Serbia and the former Baltic states the state police were retained but under very rigid control by the Germans.

No nation-wide police organization as such survived in the General Government or in the formerly Russian parts of the Ostland or the Ukraine. In the General Government the former state police were reorganized on a communal basis with local jurisdiction only. All Racial Germans and members of the SS, SA, and NSKK were subject to call as police auxiliaries. In the former Russian territory the Germans, assisted by native auxiliaries, performed most of the police duties. Local constables in rural areas were controlled by German officials.

In all occupied countries the native police were subjected to a thorough purging, including the dissolution of entire branches. Subsequently these forces were built up again by the recruitment of pro-German personnel. Former soldiers, Racial Germans, racial minorities, renegades, and criminal elements were used for this purpose. Economic controls everywhere necessitated the creation of a special corps of economic, food, or price-control police. Training of native specialists in these fields was largely in the hands of the Administrative Police.

g. The Special Native Police of the New Order

In addition to the regular native police in the occupied countries, the Germans organized auxiliary police, guard units, rural police, and combat formations. In some

cases they were established by the police, in others, by the Waffen-SS. Normally they were not given general police functions since no provision had been made to train them elaborately. In their particular fields, however, these special units contributed enormously to the German system of repression.

The SS played a predominant role in organizing such units in Norway and Holland. Waffen-SS guard battalions in Norway and the militia (Landwacht) in Holland were both under SS leadership. Native leaders, to the extent that they could be used, were drawn from the ranks of the Waffen-SS because, it was believed, they had demonstrated their dependability by their willingness to fight.

In the General Government and Serbia, Racial Germans were used extensively as auxiliaries. Their duties included the mounting of special guards and the enforcement of economic regulations in rural areas.

In parts of the General Government, in Serbia, Slovakia, and in the Ostland and Ukraine, the chief problem confronting the German police was security against guerrillas. In Slovakia, Volksdeutsche (Racial Germans) formed the Heimatschutz to fight the partisans. Highly militarized militia (Schutzmannschaften) were organized in the Ostland and the Ukraine. Made up of former soldiers and, wherever possible, of minority racial groups, these units could be mobilized and placed in the field wherever danger arose. Some units received intensive military training and were sent away to fight guerrillas in distant areas.

Wherever guerrillas existed on a small scale the Security Police and the SD had the special duty of tracking them down. It became a common practice for the German Security Services to build up detachments of native personnel (sometimes called Einheimische Behelfer) for guard duties

and for small actions against guerrillas. Good food and clothing, a position of prestige, and an opportunity to share in the fruits of a German victory were the inducements offered. Training included infantry tactics, security measures, and a certain amount of Nazi ideology. These units were raised on the land and, when their usefulness ended, summarily disbanded.

4. The Police and SS as Terror Organizations

The sober and methodical steps taken by the Nazis to build up their system of police controls were supplemented by methods of terrorism. The men who created the administrative machinery described above were the same individuals who were responsible for the machine-gunning of civilians packed tightly into cellars or even churches, for the use of gas chambers and crematories for the innocent victims of Nazi racial theories, and for the execution of hostages. The police and the SS are both responsible for the greatest part of Nazi terrorism.

In the West and in the Protectorate the application of Nazi racial theories and the Nazi dream of a peaceful, satisfied Europe under their control dictated a less extreme policy than elsewhere. Stern and brutal measures were used in these areas, but they were by no means as common as those employed against the unfortunate populations of Eastern Europe. In the West and the Protectorate, hostages were carefully counted -- so many for the killing of a policeman, so many for the life of a high official. In the East, countless thousands went to their death simply because they were Jews or Slavs.

D. MILITARY POLICE AND SECURITY UNITS

Control over occupied Europe was accomplished by employing military police, guards, and security units as well as the German civilian police system. In the policing of occupied territory the commander or authority in charge may have used any of these units depending on his mission and the elements available to him. In the main, however, these military units dealt with military personnel, and only secondarily with the civilian population of occupied countries. Although much personnel was taken over from the civilian police, there is evidence of competition and confusion in the activities of civilian and military police. In most instances the SS-dominated civilian police, backed by Heinrich Himmler, its all-powerful leader, won out.

1. The Field Gendarmerie (Feldgendarmerie)

The German organization which was most similar to the American military police was the Feldgendarmerie. Its functions, however, were less comprehensive than those of the American MP's. The foremost duty of the German gendarmes was military traffic control. Their functions were limited and their number presumably small because the German civilian police were highly organized, well trained, and capable of policing military personnel, especially within Germany; moreover, discipline in the German Army was rigid and officers and non-commissioned officers assumed the responsibility of control on and off duty. Officers and men of any arm or branch could be and were assigned police duties as required and, as a consequence, military police were used chiefly in conjunction with combat units, e.g., in rear areas.

a. Duties

The normal duties of the Feldgendarmerie, especially in home territory, comprised not only military traffic control,

but also other military protection and security services that might become necessary. The transport of military prisoners seemed to be a duty of the Feldgendarmerie. In occupied territory they could even have to fulfill all police functions if so required, with the exception of those specifically assigned to secret police and security units. For example, MP's have been detailed to local town commanders for the purpose of patrolling streets. Feldgendarme reportedly have been used in assisting the civilian Zollfahndungstellen (customs intelligence offices).

Their chief functions in traffic control were the giving of first aid and the establishment of responsibility in traffic accidents. An officer of the Feldgendarmerie could be detailed as road commandant over special sections of roads. In addition, units could be called upon to assist in the maintenance of military discipline and control of military personnel on roads and in cities. These gendarmes may also have been used for the rounding up of available civilian population capable of labor.

b. Organization

The Feldgendarmerie was composed principally of officers and men drawn from the civilian police force.

Detachments within Germany were under the command of the various Corps Area commanders. On the front MP detachments assigned to combat organizations received orders from divisional staffs. In a rear area their commandants controlled the police service in the name of army headquarters.

In occupied territory the chain of command was reportedly as follows: a Höherer Stabsoffizier (senior staff officer) of the Feldgendarmerie, regularly a colonel, was attached to the staff of the Militärbefehlshaber (military commander of an occupied country). He gave orders to staff officers, regularly of major's rank, attached to

the staffs of the military commanders of sub-districts. On the next lower level were officers, mostly of first lieutenant's rank, attached to the Feldkommandanturen (administrative sub-area headquarters). Subordinated to them were Feldgendarmerie lieutenants attached to urban Ortskommandanturen (town headquarters) or rural Kreiskommandanturen (county headquarters).

2. The Patrol Service (Streifendienst)

a. Duties

The Wehrmachtstreifendienst (Patrol Service of the Armed Forces--Army, Navy, and Air Force -- as well as Waffen-SS) investigated and combatted the undermining of military discipline. The chief duty of the service was the maintenance of discipline outside the unit. One of the chief functions popularly attributed to an American MP, the checking of travel and leave papers, was the duty of the Streifendienst, not of the Feldgendarmerie. Other aspects of the service were the "welfare" of military personnel outside the unit and the supervision of coffee kitchens and similar installations. These functions were exercised in the Reich area, including Bohemia-Moravia, and the General Government, in all occupied countries, and in Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Finland, Slovakia, Croatia, and Denmark.

b. Organization

The corresponding patrol services of the three branches of the Armed Forces and of the Waffen-SS were unified in May 1944. The decree setting up the unified service stressed that the organization and its numerical strength was to be kept down to a minimum. The chief of the service received the status of a corps commander and was subordinated to the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces directly. Personnel was to be recruited from suitable energetic soldiers with

records of meritorious service at the fronts and, if possible, with decorations. To an ever increasing extent, the service employed wounded soldiers physically capable of performing the duties of the patrol service.

The authority of the Streifendienst greatly exceeded that of the ordinary military police. They could impose and carry out punishment for disciplinary infractions that were not offenses against penal laws and appeals had no postponing effect. For offenses against penal laws the culprit was turned over to the nearest court of his branch of the Armed Forces or of the Waffen-SS.

Contacts between the Streifendienst and the civilian population of occupied territories were probably limited, although the population was affected indirectly by the Patrol Service's disciplinary measures.

Units with more far-reaching authority than even the Streifendienst were the Feldjäger (field chasseurs), who could use every means at their disposal to combat breakdowns of military morale in front sectors to which they were assigned. The civilian population was not likely to come in contact with these units.

3. The Secret Field Police (Geheime Feldpolizei, GFP)

a. Duties

The Secret Field Police were designed mainly to combat subversive activities within the Armed Forces. Their duties included supervision of soldiers, especially in their contacts with the civilian population on the streets, in restaurants, and brothels, and on trains, and censorship of correspondence between soldiers and the civilian population.

The Secret Field Police as a political control organization cooperated closely with the Gestapo and the

Security Service of the Party, as well as with the Abwehr organization (military intelligence and counter-intelligence). With Himmler's enlargement of his powers any competition between GFP and Gestapo was decided in favor of the latter, with a good deal of resulting confusion. But the Secret Field Police are said to have assisted the Gestapo and Abwehr in emergency situations, in France, for example.

The relation between Secret Field Police and Feldgendarmerie seems to have been restricted to the turning over of prisoners to the latter for transport.

b. Organization

The leading personnel of the GFP were in most instances recruited from the civilian Security Police. This fact did not always make for amity with the soldiers. Members of the GFP retained, moreover, the right to wear civilian clothes.

The GFP was organized into Gruppen (groups) and attached to Army or Air Force units. The Navy had a similar organization. Normally one group was attached to one army and one or more groups to the military commander of each occupied country.

The Feldpolizeichef der Wehrmacht (Chief of Field Police of the Armed Forces) holds the rank of colonel. In occupied countries the central direction of the secret field police work seems to have rested with the military commander. Feldpolizeidirektoren (Directors of Field Police), of major's rank, were in charge of individual groups, reportedly attached to each office of a commander of an occupied district. Subordinate offices (Dienststellen), usually headed by a Feldpolizeikommissar of captain's rank, are said to have been located in all important military garrisons.

4. Military Security Units

A number of military security and guard units were organized within the Armed Forces.

Landesschützen 1/ regiments and battalions, employed for guard duties within Germany and for support of the military administration of occupied countries, were composed of older personnel and of soldiers temporarily or permanently unfit for field service. They specialized in the protection of prisoner-of-war camps, railroad and river communications, power plants, etc., in Germany as well as in occupied countries and in rear areas of operations.

Such units could be upgraded and receive the designation Sicherungsbataillone (Security Battalions). This designation characterized more mobile units with better equipment (even artillery) than the regular Landesschützen. Such units were used to guard military installations against partisans. They have reportedly been used in mopping-up operations in communication zones.

The terms Wachregimenter and Bataillone (guard regiments or battalions) seem to have been used for detachments guarding headquarters in larger cities especially. Paris, for example, had its own German Wachregiment. Such units reportedly used draftees fit for limited service only. The Navy had similar formations. Thus, in France the civilian guards, composed to a large extent of Frenchmen (for the protection of wharves and other naval installations), in accordance with Hague regulations were militarized as Wachwehr (Guard Militia) and subordinated to the Oberwerftstab (Higher Wharf Staff) of the Navy Group Command West.

1/ This is the traditional name of a Tyrolian crack unit. A literal translation would be "provincial rifle men." More fitting is the term "local defense units," which is not to be confused with the new Volkssturm, or home guard.

E. THE ALLGEMEINE SS (GENERAL SS)

Members of the Allgemeine SS were active in the Security Police and its two subdivisions -- the State Police and the Criminal Police. They also formed the Security Service.

The Allgemeine SS was organized into Oberabschnitte (main sections), subdivided into Abschnitte (sections) and Standarten of about regimental size with numerous smaller units. The main sections were regularly headed by an SS Obergruppenführer (senior group leader, equivalent to German full general, American lieutenant general). Such an official could hold the position of Höherer SS und Polizeiführer (Higher SS and Police Leader), thus combining the commands of Allgemeine SS and police in a region.

In the incorporated or annexed territories main sections were set up in Danzig (called "Weichsel"), Salzburg ("Alpenland"), Wien ("Donau"), Posen ("Wartheland") and in 1944 in Prague ("Böhmen und Mähren"). An SS section for the occupied parts of France was established in Strasbourg. The Allgemeine SS in the Netherlands was organized as main section "Northwest" in The Hague, that of Norway as main section "North" in Oslo.

While SS men were engaged as individual officials in all the occupied countries, SS Oberabschnitte and Abschnitte were established only in those areas where the population was considered worthy.

F. THE WAFFEN-SS (MILITARIZED SS)

1. General

The Waffen-SS was a voluntary military organization consisting of at least twenty divisions, several brigades, and some smaller units.1/ About half of these were Panzer Divisions and most of the others were motorized. Its function was twofold. First, it served at the front, where it was placed at the disposal of the Army High Command and fought in conjunction with other elements of the Wehrmacht. Second, the SS played an important role in occupied Europe. There it recruited Racial Germans, pro-German aliens, and foreigners whose local partisan interests ran parallel to those of the German Government. These "volunteers" were trained and put to use as front soldiers. After service at the front, some of them were returned to their native countries to assist the work of the police or the local SS.

2. History

a. Early Development: Verfügungstruppen and Totenkopfverbände

Early in 1933 a group of one hundred twenty members of the SS were organized into a separate command and placed on full-time military duty. They became the "SS Staff-Guard Adolf Hitler" and were equipped with steel helmets and carbines. Shortly thereafter they were organized as Hitler's own regiment, the Leibstandarte [Body Guard] SS Adolf Hitler and placed under the command of Sepp Dietrich with Berlin as their home station. Within the next few months similar units were organized elsewhere: SS Standarte Deutschland in Munich; SS Standarte Germania in Hamburg,

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1/ Order of Battle information with respect to these units is published by the Military Intelligence Service of the War Department.

Arolsen, and Radolfzell; SS Pionierssturmbann in Dresden; the SS Nachrichtensturmbann in Unna. For the training of leaders the SS Junkerschulen in Tölz (Bavaria) and Braunschweig were established. In March 1938 Hitler ordered the formation of a fourth regiment, Der Führer, with its home stations in Vienna, Graz, and Klagenfurt. These troops were known as the SS Verfügungstruppen.

A similar organization, the SS Deathhead Formations (SS Totenkopfverbände), constituted a second source of the Waffen-SS. This organization was originally made up of volunteers from the Allgemeine SS who were used to replace the Storm Troopers (SA) in guarding concentration camps. Their reputation for cruelty hardly seems exaggerated.

b. Pre-war Role

The pre-war role of these troops was to provide protection for the Führer, to guard concentration camps, and to constitute a mobile striking force for crushing any internal disorder. For this purpose the Verfügungstruppen were placed at the disposal (Verfügung) of Hitler. They were also expected to provide leadership for the Allgemeine SS, the police, and the Party Security Service from among the members of their corps who had completed the four-year enlistment.

c. Development after 1939

The development of the Waffen-SS out of the Verfügungstruppen and the Totenkopfverbände is closely related to the events of 1938 and 1939. Units of the SS took part in the occupation and policing of Austria, Sudetenland, and the Protectorate, partly in order to demonstrate that they had also participated, and partly to apprehend the "enemies of the Reich" in these territories. The SS functioned as military police for all German forces during the events of 1938. During the march into

Czechoslovakia (March 1939) the Army, however, was provided with military police formations of its own. During the early summer of 1939 the SS Verfügungstruppen proceeded to equip itself with artillery.

With the coming of war and the building up of separate SS divisions, the Waffen-SS came into being. The Verfügungstruppen regiments were built up into divisions, with the aid of cadres from the Army for the specialized arms and branches. Some of these units took part in campaigns as early as 1940.

During this period Racial Germans and "Germanic" foreigners were first introduced into the ranks of the military SS. The SS aimed to foster in every way the development of a strong, dependable pro-German group in the occupied and satellite countries of Europe. Military and ideological training in the ranks of the Waffen-SS was an obvious means to this end. However, with the failure of the German Army to win an easy victory in Russia and the threat of invasion from the west, the ability of the SS to tap sources of manpower beyond the reach of the Wehrmacht became an important factor in the German war effort. Evidence of this fact was seen in the reorganization of the uneconomical but showy foreign "legions" first into regiments and later into brigades and divisions, in the conscription of Baltic and Balkan populations, and in the employment of non-Germanic Ruthenians, Ukrainians, White Russians, and Croatians, including Mohammedans.

3. Recruitment, Training, and Employment of Personnel

There were three general groups in the Waffen-SS: German nationals, Racial Germans (Volksdeutsche), and foreigners. Only the two latter groups are pertinent to the problem of German policies and measures in occupied Europe.

a. Racial Germans (Volksdeutsche)

"Racial Germans" were persons of German ancestry who were citizens of non-German countries. In accordance with the broad program of bringing such persons living in occupied or satellite countries into the service of the Reich, a special effort was made to enlist in the Waffen-SS those of military age who measured up to the special Waffen-SS physical and political qualifications. To facilitate this program special arrangements were made with the satellite countries to provide for recruiting within their borders and for the transfer of Racial Germans from their armies.

The training of Racial Germans followed the usual pattern of SS political and military education. However, in view of the fact that these recruits had not had the benefits of a Hitler Youth education, more emphasis was placed on National Socialist ideology, especially as it related to Germany's European mission. Military training may have been abbreviated in some instances because of the training which personnel received in foreign armies. Officers and non-commissioned officers who graduated from the Junkerschule at Tölz (eventually used exclusively for the training of Racial Germans and alien SS) were thoroughly trained in assault techniques, bunker storming, and street fighting. They mastered the use of all firearms, including flame throwers and trench mortars. Great emphasis was laid on political training, and the students were imbued with the idea that they fought for Gross Deutschland. They were taught to think and act as the privileged elite of their country.

Racial German Waffen-SS personnel were to be found in almost every combat unit. A large number of those from Rumania, the Banat, and Hungary were in the mountain division Prinz Eugen, stationed in Serbia. Other Waffen-SS units

were incorporated into the framework of the Rumanian Army. (After Rumania's defection from the Axis a pro-German Rumanian Legion was organized under Waffen-SS auspices. The latter was presumably composed of non-Germanic elements.)

A number of Racial German units were transferred from duty at the front to police duty in occupied areas and in Germany proper. It is said that Himmler considered them to be the most reliable forces at the disposal of the Germans.

b. Foreign Waffen-SS Personnel

(1) General

Recruitment of foreigners into the ranks of the Waffen-SS was undertaken originally for political and psychological purposes. The reorganization of national legions into regiments and divisions, and the introduction of a larger element of compulsion in recruiting, made it evident that the Germans meant to exploit this source of manpower to the limit. The general pattern was to draft individual foreigners into the Wehrmacht proper, while entire foreign legions were incorporated into the Waffen-SS. Recruiting, training, and employment of foreigners followed different lines in the various regions of controlled Europe.

(2) The West

(a) General. In the West, the population as a whole was hostile. Consequently, recruiting was voluntary and addressed itself to the minority pro-German group. As in the case of the Volksdeutsche, military service in the SS was a prerequisite for younger men before the assumption of responsibility in the local SS, police, or government.

Recruitment and assignment of personnel from the West was in the hands of the Head Office for Germanic

Volunteers of the Military SS (Germanische Freiwilligenleitstelle der Waffen-SS) in Berlin. Many "Germanic" volunteers were assigned to the SS training depot at Sennheim in Alsace. There, in numbers up to four thousand, they received their basic political training and some military drill without arms. Training with arms followed at Klagenfurt and Graz. Those who held commissions before were sent to the Junkerschule at Tölz. Others may have been sent there after they had distinguished themselves in the field. Their training was similar to that which is given the Volksdeutsche. However, there was no Germanization of alien students. Regional origins were honored, but the German language was taught, especially the language of military command, because orders were given in German in all Waffen-SS units.

(b) Norway. Recruitment in Norway offered a clear example of the development of stages in Waffen-SS policy. In the period 1940-41, only young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three were allowed to apply for admission into the Regiment Nordland. They were required to be unmarried, of good physique, and "Nordic." In 1941 the upper age limit was lifted to forty. Finally, volunteers for the SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Norge could be married or single, seventeen to forty-five years old, and 5'5" in height. This regiment was later incorporated into the SS Panzergrenadier Division Wiking. Candidates who applied for Waffen-SS guard duties within Norway were assured that their appointment carried with it no political ties. Although these guard units were subjected to ideological training, National Socialists reportedly composed much less than 50 percent of the membership.

(c) Denmark. Danish volunteers were invited to join the Wiking and Nordland units of the Waffen-SS. The Danish "Free Corps" was founded in 1941 by a Danish army

officer and served until 1943 as part of the 1st SS Infantry Brigade. Recruiting for this Free Corps was supervised by the SS. The corps was withdrawn from the Eastern Front for reorganization of a Panzergrenadier Regiment Denmark that was later incorporated into the Panzergrenadier Division Nordland. The return of trained SS men for use within Denmark followed the same pattern as in Norway, although no Danish Allgemeine SS organization existed as such.

(d) The Netherlands. "To defend the Netherlands against domestic and foreign elements" the Landwacht was organized under the supervision of the German Waffen-SS in May 1943. However, the suppression of disturbances was first left to German SS units. Later in 1943, the Landwacht was changed into a fully militarized Landstorm, and a new Landwacht organized for police duties. In 1944, the Landstorm Nederland, combat unit, was enlarged from a Grenadier Regiment into a brigade.

(e) Belgium. In 1940 Flemish volunteers entered the SS Regiment Westland. Later, this unit became part of the Wiking Division. In 1944, a special Flemish division, the SS Grenadier Division Flanders was formed out of the SS Sturmbrigade Langemarck and other quisling Flenings.

Recruitment among Walloons began in the summer of 1942. A sufficient number enlisted to justify the formation of a separate Walloon brigade, which was expanded into a Grenadier Division in 1944.

(f) France. Although French volunteer "legions" were active on the Eastern Front as part of the Wehrmacht as early as 1941, the formation of a Waffen-SS regiment composed of Frenchmen was not undertaken until the middle of 1943. Sanctioned by the Vichy law of 22 July 1943, the French Waffen-SS was utilized in the Russian theater of operations, and in France for the guarding of military

installations. Late in 1944, French quislings of the former French AA assault brigade and of the Darnand Franc-Garde were merged into the SS Brigade Charlemagne.

(g) The Baltic States. Recruitment of personnel in the Baltic states was carried out on a mass basis. The first non-Germanic unit to be taken into the Waffen-SS was the Estonian Legion which was inducted in the fall of 1942. As the manpower requirements of the German Army increased, government pressure was used to force members of civil defense corps and ex-soldiers into the Waffen-SS. The head of the Estonian civil administration ordered that all officers and non-commissioned officers join the legion (later called SS Volunteer Division) in conformity with their oath to defend the country.

The development in Latvia followed the typical pattern: first, several regiments were formed; these were expanded into brigades, and finally in 1944 into two SS Grenadier divisions. Resistance to the Waffen-SS was strongest in Lithuania, where a "volunteer" division was not recruited until 1944.

(h) Southeastern Europe. Hungary formed two Waffen-SS divisions; the German-occupied remainder of Italy formed an Italian Legion, the Polish Ukrainians, a Waffen-SS Schützendivision Galizien with German and Austrian commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

The SS Division Bosnia included one regiment of Roman Catholic Croats and one regiment of Mohammedans. The latter, first used in combatting Serbian guerrillas, was an example of the completely opportunistic methods of the SS. This Mohammedan unit as well as the Muslim Division Skanderbeg, composed largely of Albanians, had no ideological foundations. Similarly, the Waffen-SS comprised Caucasian, Arab, and Indian units.